

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 33330 01 OF 02 071138Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 33330

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SUBJECT: FY 1979 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL CONGRESSIONAL
PRESENTATION; GENERAL NARCOTICS INFORMATION PROFILE

REF: STATE 271848

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING IS THE GENERAL NARCOTICS INFORMATION
PROFILE FOR THAILAND, SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO PARA 2 OF
REFTEL. OUR SUBMISSION IS KEYED TO REFTEL AND LETTERING IN
THIS MESSAGE CORRESPONDS TO CATEGORIES IN REFTEL. END SUMMARY.

A. THE PROBLEM. THE THAI NARCOTICS PROBLEM HAS THREE
COMPONENTS. THE ETHNIC MINORITIES LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINOUS
AREAS OF NORTHERN THAILAND PRODUCE ABOUT 50 TONS OF RAW
OPIUM PER YEAR. AN AMOUNT EQUIVALENT TO THIS IS CONSUMED
IN THAILAND EITHER BY THE PRODUCERS AS OPIUM (IN THE
ABSENCE OF OTHER MEDICINES) OR AS HEROIN. MORE IMPORTANTLY,
THAILAND SERVES AS A PROCESSING CENTER FOR MUCH LARGER
QUANTITIES OF RAW OPIUM PRODUCED IN BURMA AND AS A CONDUIT
FOR OPIUM-DERIVED NARCOTICS FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE TO
HONG KONG, EUROPE, AND THE UNITED STATES. HISTORICALLY,
MANY OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE
ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN BANGKOK. FINALLY, THAILAND
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 33330 01 OF 02 071138Z

FINDS ITSELF WITH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NARCOTICS
ADDICTS AMONG ITS OWN POPULATION, AS THE DIRECT USE OF
OPIUM DECLINES, ESPECIALLY IN THE CITIES.

B & C. US INTEREST AND STRATEGY. THE US INTERESTS
LIE IN (1) REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF HEROIN PROCESSED AND
TRANSHIPPED IN THAILAND THAT EVENTUALLY REACHES THE

UNITED STATES; (2) REDUCING THE ILLICIT PRODUCTION OF OPIUM IN THAILAND. THE US PURSUES THESE INTERESTS IN THE NEAR TERM BY ASSISTING THE RTG IN ENFORCEMENT, CROP SUBSTITUTION AND AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, AS WELL AS SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS.

D. PROGRESS TO DATE. THE RTG IMPROVED ITS NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT EFFORT CONSIDERABLY IN THE PAST YEAR. UNDER PRIME MINISTER THANIN THE RTG STRONGLY COMMITTED ITSELF TO RESTRICTING THE NARCOTICS TRADE. THIS COMMITMENT RESULTED IN INCREASED SEIZURES OF NARCOTICS, AND THE ARREST AND EXECUTION OF SEVERAL KEY MIDDLE LEVEL TRAFFICKERS DEMONSTRATED CLEARLY TO TRAFFICKERS THAT DRUG TRADING IN THAILAND IS NOW A RISKY ENTERPRISE. SECRETARY OF THE POLICE NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION COMMITTEE GENERAL PHAO SARASIN POINTED OUT THAT THE RTG SEIZED 643 KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN DURING 1976, WHICH MAY BE A WORLD RECORD FOR ONE COUNTRY.

1. AS A RESULT OF HIS PERSONAL INTEREST THANIN CREATED THE OFFICE OF NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD TO OVERSEE DRUG-RELATED ACTIVITIES. THE NCB REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER. THANIN GAVE MUCH PERSONAL ATTENTION TO NARCOTICS MATTERS. NEW PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN HAS INDICATED THAT NARCOTICS IS HIGH ON HIS LIST OF PRIORITIES AS WELL, AND THAT THE NCB WILL CONTINUE. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 33330 01 OF 02 071138Z

2. KRIANGSAK LISTED NARCOTICS CONTROL AS ONE OF HIS 15 POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN HIS FIRST ADDRESS TO THE NATION AS PRIME MINISTER, AND HAS SINCE REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT. NOVEMBER 28, IN ADDRESS TO THE FOURTH MEETING OF OPERATIONAL HEADS OF NATIONAL NARCOTICS LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE FAR EAST, KRIANGSAK STATED, QUOTE THAILAND IS FULLY COMMITTED TO CONTROLLING DRUG ABUSE AND IS WILLING TO SHOULDER HER BURDEN SQUARELY. OUR STRONG COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS NEEDS NO ELABORATION, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS AFFIRMED ITS STRONG DETERMINATION TO WAGE A MORE EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ILLICIT PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING OF NARCOTICS UNQUOTE.

3. THE RTG, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE UNFDAC, HAS IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENTAL PORGRAMS IN OPIUM CROP SUBSTITUTION, HOWEVER, THE EXTENSION OF THESE

SUBSTITUTES INTO THE AREAS OF POPPY CULTIVATION

IS NOT YET WIDESPREAD. THE NCB HAS DEVELOPED A MASTER PLAN FOR THE EXTENSION OF SUBSTITUTE CROPS, AND FOR TREATMENT OF THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM. THE NCB IS IMPLEMENTING THIS PLAN, BUT HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY THE ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN A NEW ORGANIZATION (THANIN ORGANIZED THE NCB IN DECEMBER OF 1976). THE RECENT CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT FURTHER HINDERED DEVELOPMENT OF THE NCB.

E. NARCOTICS PRODUCTION. THERE WERE NO OBSERVABLE CHANGES IN THE PRODUCTION OF NARCOTICS.

F. PROCESSING. TRAFFICKERS MAY NOW BE MOVING LESS RAW OPIUM INTO THAILAND, ALTHOUGH AVAILABLE EVIDENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BANGKO 33330 01 OF 02 071138Z

TO SUPPORT THIS VIEW IS SCANTY. THE PATTERN HAS SHIFTED TO TRANSPORTATION OF IMPURE MORPHINE BASE (PROCESSED IN BURMA) THROUGH BURMA AND THAILAND BY HUMAN CARRIER RATHER THAN MULE TRAIN. (NOTE: IN THE TRANSITION FROM OPIUM TO MORPHINE THERE IS A 90 PERCENT REDUCTION IN VOLUME AND WEIGHT). REFINERIES IN THE BURMA-THAILAND BORDER AREA FURTHER REFINE THE MORPHINE INTO HEROIN.

G. MARKETING/TRAFFICKING. BECAUSE OF THE MORE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT EFFORT BY THE RTG, TRAFFICKERS MORE FREQUENTLY TRANSPORT DRUGS FROM BANGKOK USING COURIERS CARRYING RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNTS (1-4 KILOS) OF HEROIN. THIS REPRESENTS A CHANGE FROM THE PRACTICE OF LARGE SHIPMENTS DURING THE PREVIOUS YEARS. INCREASING QUANTITIES OF NARCOTICS APPEAR TO BE TRANSHIPPED TO EUROPE BY COURIER FROM MALAYSIA. RECENT INFORMATION INDICATES A NEW TRAFFICKING ROUTE FROM NORTHERN BURMA THROUGH INDIA, AND THEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETS.

H. LOCAL DRUG ABUSE. THE RTG HAS LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXACT OR EVEN THE APPROXIMATE EXTENT OF THE DRUG PROBLEMS IN THAILAND. THE MISSION ESTIMATES THE ADDICT POPULATION IN THE RANGE OF 200,000-300,000. RTG ESTIMATES VARY WIDELY. ALL OBSERVERS AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROBLEM IS GROWING, AND THE RTG HAS NOW BEGUN TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF ADDICTS.

I. ATTITUDES. THE RTG IS INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT THAILAND'S FUNCTION AS A HAVEN FOR INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS DAMAGES THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD. THE THANIN GOVERNMENT DID MUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 05 BANGKO 33330 01 OF 02 071138Z

TO IMPROVE THAILAND'S IMAGE IN THIS RESPECT, AND PM KRIANGSAK HAS INDICATED THAT HE TOO IS AWARE OF THE PROBLEM. THE RTG NOW WILLINGLY COOPERATES WITH OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES.

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 33330 02 OF 02 071147Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 33330

J. COMMITMENT. WITH PRIME MINISTER THANIN'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER FOLLOWING THE COUP OF OCTOBER 6, 1976, THAILAND FOR THE FIRST TIME HAD A GOVERNMENT STRONGLY COMMITTED IN WORD AND DEED TO SUPPRESSING THE NARCOTICS TRADE. THANIN SHOWED HIS OWN COMMITMENT BY CREATING THE NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD, AND BY MAKING THE BOARD DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE PRIME MINISTER. THANIN ALSO USED HIS POWERS AS PM TO ORDER THE EXECUTION OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS. WHILE KRIANGSAK HAS NOT BEEN PRIME MINISTER LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO PASS JUDGMENT, HE HAS INDICATED BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY HIS AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPRESSION EFFORT, AND HAS JOINED OTHER MILITARY LEADERS IN ORDERING THE EXECUTION OF A MAJOR TRAFFICKER. AS PM, KIRANGSAK HAS CALLED FOR INCREASED PENALTIES FOR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS, AND HAS TALKED FREQUENTLY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CROP SUBSTITUTION.

5. THE NCB STILL FUNCTIONS AND SEEMS LIKELY TO CONTINUE

TO DO SO. THE NBC-DEVELOPED MASTER PLAN IS OFFICIALLY THE THAI PROGRAM FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL. THE NCB HOPES TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN WITHIN THE NEXT CALENDAR YEAR.

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 33330 02 OF 02 071147Z

6. SEIZURES INCREASED DRAMATICALLY, BOTH IN NUMBER AND IN TOTAL AMOUNT OF NARCOTICS, AFTER THANIN ASSUMED OFFICE. DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER OF 1976 -- THE FIRST MONTHS OF THANIN'S ADMINISTRATION -- THE RTG SEIZED 205 KILOS OF HEROIN, NEARLY 1/3 OF THE TOTAL OF 643 KILOS FOR ALL OF 1976. DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 1977 THE RTG SEIZED 454 KILOS OF HEROIN. BOTH THE 1976 AND THE 1977 FIGURES SHOW A MARKED INCREASE OVER THE 116 KILOS SEIZED IN 1975. MORPHINE SEIZURES SHOW A SIMILAR TREND. WHILE SEIZING 43 KILOS IN

1975, THE RTG COLLECTED 290 KILOS IN 1976 AND 109 KILOS IN THE JANUARY-AUGUST PERIOD THIS YEAR. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, SEIZURES ARE BEING MADE IN ALL AREAS--THE AIRPORT, AT BORDER CROSSING POINTS, AND AT SEA PORTS.

K. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK. OFFICIALLY, THE NCB IS THE INSTITUTION HEADING THE RTG'S NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORT. THE NCB HAS YET TO ESTABLISH ITSELF FULLY IN THIS POSITION, AND A WIDE VARIETY OF ORGANIZATIONS ARE ACTUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL. THE POLICE NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION COMMITTEE, HEADED BY GENERAL PHAO SARASIN, HAS ACTED EFFECTIVELY, AS HAVE SOME UNITS OF THE BORDER PATROL POLICE, THE CRIME SUPPRESSION DIVISION AND THE PROVINCIAL POLICE. THESE ORGANIZATIONS INCREASED THEIR ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITY DURING THANIN'S PERIOD AS PM. THAI CUSTOMS HAS ALSO PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF SEIZURES AND ARRESTS.

L. LEGAL FRAMEWORK. THERE HAVE BEEN NO IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THIS AREA.

M. CONSTRAINTS. THE USG AND THE RTG EFFORTS TO
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 33330 02 OF 02 071147Z

SUPPRESS THE NARCOTICS TRADE ARE CONSTRAINED BY HISTORICAL AND OTHER FACTORS. TRADITIONALLY, THE BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE GROWTH AND THE TRADING OF OPIUM IN THE SHAN STATE OF NORTH-

EASTERN BURMA HAVE HAD THE SYMPATHY OF MANY THAI, WHO ADMIRE THE ANTI-COMMUNIST AND ANTI-BURMESE STANCE OF THESE GROUPS. THIS ADMIRATION CONFLICTS TO SOME EXTENT WITH THE SUPPRESSION OF THE NARCOTICS TRADE.

7. THE THAI POLICE HAVE LONG BEEN UNDERPAID, AND INDIVIDUAL POLICE HAVE SUPPLEMENTED THEIR INCOME BY ACTIVELY ENGAGING IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, OR TAKING BRIBES FOR ALLOWING THE TRAFFICKING TO GO ON. WHILE THESE PRACTICES HAVE BEEN REDUCED, THEY HAVE BY NO MEANS BEEN ELIMINATED. CORRUPTION STILL EXISTS WIDELY.

8. THE EFFORT TO ELIMINATE OPIUM-GROWING HAS BEEN SLOWED BY THE EVIDENT DECISION OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT THAT THE BAN ON THE GROWING OF OPIUM WILL NOT BE ENFORCED UNTIL SUBSTITUTE CROPS ARE DEVELOPED. IN THIS WAY, THE RTG HOPES TO REDUCE OPIUM PRODUCTION WITHOUT IMPOVERISHING THE OPIUM FARMER.

N. PARTICIPATING US AGENCIES. WE ARE RECOMMENDING A CONTINUATION OF OUR PRESENT EFFORTS IN THE TRAINING OF ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, COLLECTION OF INTELLIGENCE, AND ASSISTANCE TO ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. WE WILL ASK FOR FUNDING FOR THE MAE CHAEM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (A HIGHLANDS CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECT) WHEN THE RTG IS READY TO BEGIN WORK. AT PRESENT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WISE TO INITIATE MAJOR NEW PROGRAMS UNTIL THEY CAN BE INTEGRATED INTO A THAI PROGRAM AND COORDINATED WITH ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER DONORS.

O. OTHER DONORS. THE UNFDAC HAS FUNDED A CROP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BANGKO 33330 02 OF 02 071147Z

SUBSTITUTION RESEARCH PROJECT IN THE ANG KHANH WATERSHED IN CHIANG MAI FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS. THE UNFDAC PLANS TO FUND THE PROJECT THROUGH DECEMBER 1978. HILL-TRIBES IN THE PROJECT HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT A NUMBER OF CROPS SUCH AS COFFEE, KIDNEY BEANS, STRAWBERRIES AND LEGUMES CAN SUCCESSFULLY BE GROWN IN PLACE OF OPIUM. UNFDAC ALSO FUNDS A SMALL PROJECT FOR THE TREATMENT OF DRUG ADDICTS IN BANGKOK.

P. FUTURE OUTLOOK. IN THE NEXT YEAR WE EXPECT NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE NARCOTICS SITUATION IN THAILAND. THE CABINET HEADED BY PM KRIANGSAK HAS INDICATED IT WILL ACTIVELY SUPPRESS NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, AND AS YET HAVE GIVEN US NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO PLACE GREAT EMPHASIS ON ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES. IMPORTANT RTG INITIATIVES IN

THE AREA OF CROP SUBSTITUTION MAY DEVELOP AS THE RTG HAS GARNERED A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTES FOR OPIUM, AND NOW PLANS TO START EXTENDING THE CULTIVATION OF SUBSTITUTE CROPS INTO OPIUM-PRODUCING AREAS.

8. THE LONG TERM OUTLOOK IS NOT SANGUINE, FOR WHILE THE RTG IMPROVED ITS ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR, THE EFFORT STILL STOPS ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE NARCOTICS BEING TRANSPORTED.

Q. RECOMMENDED WASHINGTON ACTION. WE ARE QUITE PLEASED WITH THE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM WASHINGTON. AS STATED ABOVE, AT PRESENT THE RTG IS NOW BEGINNING TO MAKE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT A CROP SUBSTITUTION EFFORT IN THE OPIUM-PRODUCING AREAS OF NORTHERN THAILAND. UNTIL THE RTG PROGRESSES FURTHER ALONG THIS LINE, WE ASK ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 05 BANGKO 33330 02 OF 02 071147Z

CONTINUED SUPPORT, AND BELIEVE THAT MAJOR INITIATIVES WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME.
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